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CHAPTER XVII

CULTURE CONTACT AND CULTURE CHANGE

The relativistic approach: value of comparative and historical study—*interpenetration of the tribes*: ethnogenesis of the Lovedu and evolution of some of their cultural patterns—*the iconoclasm of Christianity*: breaking down and building up among converts, repercussions among pagans—*the challenge of Western conquest*: the indirect responses of the culture and its undisturbed foundations.

THE RELATIVISTIC APPROACH

For the past half-century Western conquest and civilization have been challenging Lovedu culture. For centuries before that various Bantu cultures had percolated into the Lovedu lowveld. As a result, there has been cultural change, not only in the past few years, but throughout all the ages. Change is inescapable, continuous, ever-present, and there is no evidence that in the European period it has been revolutionary, while in the pre-European period it was merely evolutionary. There is a distinction, but to present the contrast as that between disruptive change and gradual development is unwarranted. The greatest disturbances brought about by contact with Western culture cannot, in their effect upon institutions and cultural patterns, be compared with the major cultural evolution, not only of the Lovedu, but of many other tribes, within measurable periods of time.

The evidence of great changes afforded by an historical and comparative study of the tribes of the Northern Transvaal is overwhelming. Thus, for instance, the cultures of the Lovedu and of their kinsmen, the Mamavolo, have widely diverged since their separation from one another 250 years ago. The Mamavolo are like their immediate neighbours, the highveld Sotho, and unlike the Lovedu, not only in their handling of the major cultural complexes, such as the royal institutions, the 'schools', marriages, agricultural ritual, and village structure, but also in countless details of culture. They tolerate no female rulers, have given up ritual suicide of the chief, no longer appeal to the rite of the door to determine succession to the throne, and neither accept wives as tribute nor redistribute them in order to link up the political system. In minor details, such as their material culture and methods of threshing, and the absence among the Mamavolo of *thugula* (dedicated) cattle and of the practice of elongating the *labia minora*, their differences from the Lovedu are equally striking. The total impression of their culture and of their methods of expressing hostility to the European differs so greatly from that of the Lovedu that it is difficult to credit the common ancestry of these two tribes. Yet the evidence of history and of remembered, but no longer practised, custom is decisive.

Moreover, misgivings soon disappear in the light of further historical and comparative investigation. The Shai, immigrants since *c.* 1790 into the lowveld from amid Pedi and Transvaal Ndebele in the south, resemble the Lovedu far more closely than do their kinsmen, the Mamavolo. The

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174 Sekhɔpɔ, splitting off from the Lovedu royal group (*c.* 1800) and subjected to Pedi-highveld-Sotho influences, though only twenty miles from Ulovedu, are less like their present-day Lovedu royal relatives than are the Tswale. But the Tswale are foreigners, tracing descent from the Venda royal house of Thɔhɔ-ya-Ndɔu; they entered the Lovedu sphere of influence (*c.* 1730), and they lost close touch with the main body of the Venda (*c.* 1840). In language and almost all major aspects of culture the Tswale have been Loveduized. They have not adopted the specialized Lovedu royal complex of institutions, but equally they have lost their characteristically Venda elements. Thus, of Venda elements, they have given up the *dɔmbɔ* and *thɔndɔ* 'schools' and the attribution of extensive powers to a high god; even the peculiar Venda disposition of forces and persons in the political organization is little more than a memory; and differences in detail from the Lovedu, such as peeling the skin off a goat's tail before killing it ritually, which is a royal Venda feature, are no greater than the differences found between one district and another in Ulovedu itself. These are not isolated instances of divergent cultural evolution in response to divergent environments and contacts. Dozens of examples emerge from an historical and comparative investigation of the Northern Transvaal alone.

121 In the whole of our field investigation, nothing has been more fruitful and stimulating than our visits to twenty-six Northern Transvaal tribes. There can be no doubt that, had there been time to study ten times that number of tribes over a much wider area, the value and suggestiveness of the comparative and historical background would have been correspondingly enhanced, against which the direction, nature, and magnitude of cultural changes might be evaluated. There arise problems of method, even of the legitimacy of making inferences from one tribe to another. We shall not deal with them here except to say that breadth and depth of observation and fertility of interpretation largely depend upon the range of one's knowledge and experience. If inferences from variations within the tribe are legitimate—nay, absolutely necessary—for the most elementary presentation or generalization, by the same reasoning they must be legitimate across the boundaries of tribes. Culture elements, culture patterns, and the major cultural configurations do not stop short upon the borders of districts, nor of tribes, nor even of culture areas.

Comparative study has enabled us to see in actual being the diffusion of culture elements across the boundaries of districts, tribes, and culture areas. The different handling by different cultures of the same cultural material, according to the needs of their environment or the genius or emphases of their patterns, can be observed and its results established without any doubt by comparative investigation. Once it can be determined that the raw cultural material is the same, deductions from variations in forms and functions or in purposes and goals are far from being illegitimate, but illuminate the distinctive trends of the cultures in which they occur. Inferences from incommensurable variations are illegitimate; but the wider the range of comparison and the more intensive the functional investigation, the easier it is to eliminate this error

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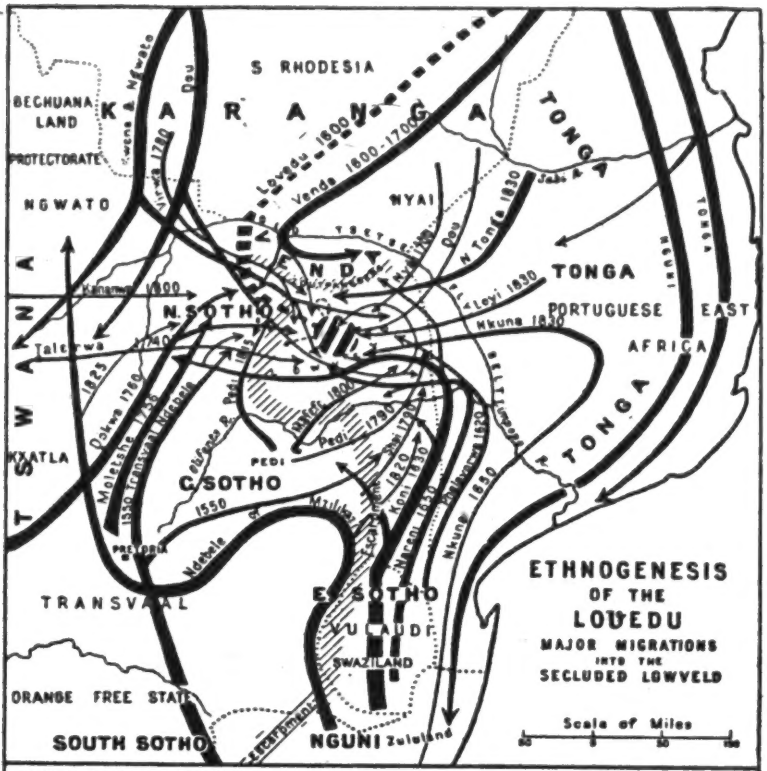

TABLE OF PEOPLES AND CULTURES

PRE-LOVEDU SOTHO SUBSTRATUM (1500-1600)

SOTHO: Kwena and Ngwato
SOTHO?: Tsonga and Khoga
SOTHO-KARANGA: Pay
SOTHO-Nguni: Transvaal Ndebele

VENDA and KARANGA (1600-1880)

VENDA cross Limpopo 1600-1700
Ryal settle in Vuloredu c. 1700
VENDA: Tswale & Mbile move S. c. 1730
SOTHO-KARANGA: Virwa move SE. c. 1780
KARANGA-SOTHO: Thavhi arrive c. 1800
VENDA: driven S. by Shangana-Tonga 1840-80

EASTERN SOTHO & SOTHO-NGUNI (1700-1870)

LAUDI: Koni, Noveni & Phalaborwa interpenetrate Lovedu 1700—

SOTHO: mixed central and Eastern Sotho refugees from SE. 1810-70

CENTRAL SOTHO (1800-70)

PEDI: invasions from S.&SW. 1790-1840
SHAI: dispersal to Vuloredu c. 1840
MAFEFE: raids & conquests 1830-68
MIXED SOTHO: fleeing refugees 1810-70

NORTHERN & WESTERN SOTHO (1740-1840)

TALERWA: c. 1740
DOKWA: from SW 1760-1800
KWENA: moving E 1700-1820
MIXED PEDI-N.SOTHO from W. 1810-40

TONGA & SHANGANA-TONGA (1650-1896)

TONGA: early dribbits 1650-1800
NKUNA: arrive, 1835
Various Shangana-Tonga, 1835-96.

EUROPEANS (1880—)

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Oral traditions of the past, it is said, are unreliable and unverifiable. Accounts by informants about the present are also unreliable and often, unless one lives a lifetime in the society, unverifiable. Even the most elementary facts observed do not speak for themselves and have to be interpreted, and the verification of objective facts becomes a complicated process not unlike verification of historical material from such circumstantial evidence as is provided by comparative study. Certainly, in our experience, what was impressive was the substantial agreement among all the tribes upon the main events and migrations, which also provided useful clues to diffusions of culture in the past. The lack of discrimination as regards place and time and the dramatizations and justifications were difficulties which gradually disappeared as the background of comparison was enlarged. Even the discrepancies, seen against the total background, illuminated the local trends and motivations, and proved to be more apparent than real.

Most men of the Lovedu royal group to-day deny their Karanga ancestry, although ten years ago they admitted it. You will tap their memories in vain to discover either the truth or the reason for the change of attitude. But in the light of comparative investigation—for this phenomenon is not unique among the tribes—and of a study of reactions between 1926 and 1936, the change is intelligible. The suspicion that the releasing of land to the Native under the Land Act, in pursuance of a segregation policy, might be a device to dispossess the tribe engendered a profound disturbance to men's sense of security, which could be re-established only by affirming the title of immemorial occupation of Vuloyedu. The method of relativistic functionalism ensures, not merely perspective, but also balanced and comprehensive interpretations.

INTERPENETRATION OF THE TRIBES

Lovedu culture as it is to-day is the result of a complicated historical process. For some indication of the genesis of the tribe and of its culture, the reader is referred to the accompanying map; we cannot discuss the evidence in this book.

More than 300 years ago there were tribes sparsely scattered over the whole of the Northern Transvaal. This area lay outside the main migratory currents: Nguni and Tonga coming down on the east, Sotho-Tswana circling the curve of the Limpopo on the west, and Karanga halting between these two to the north of the tsetse-fly belt along the Limpopo. The date of these migrations and their relation to one another is lost in oblivion, but trickles from these currents and backwater eddying from them, particularly from the Sotho-Tswana current, penetrated into the Lovedu lowveld. There were, however, Kwena and Ngwato who descended the escarpment in force only after arrival on the highveld of invaders from the east (Koni, *c.* 1700), the south or south-west (Dokwa, *c.* 1760, and Moletshe, *c.* 1750), and the north (Virwa, *c.* 1780). Some of these Kwena and Ngwato form a chain of peoples, no longer independent, from the north, round the west and to the south of Vuloyedu, into the political and cultural structure of which many have been incorporated.

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●174 In pre-Lovedu times there were also the famous *ɗou*, Elephants who are everywhere a dependent substratum, except for a small group, the Masoma, living among the Mahlo or Nareni of Segɔrɔrɔ. This cluster is very old, was interpenetrated with a culture evolved at the junction of Karanga and Sotho streams in the north-west near the home of the Lirwa, and scattered sparsely over the whole of the lowveld. Lovedu tradition asserts that the Lovedu, migrating southwards, found them on their way and incorporated them as messengers; and there is no doubt that at various periods many of them, owing to pressure elsewhere, settled in Lulovedu. There were other pre-Lovedu peoples in the lowveld, such as the Khiɔga, Dgɔna, Sɔja-Phala, mostly offshoots of mixed Sotho and Karanga, and a few so-called Transvaal Ndebele emanating from the far south.

Despite slight intrusions of Ṭonga, the ethnic and cultural composition of the pre-Lovedu lowveld was predominantly Sotho, considerably influenced, however, by the culture and peoples that had evolved on the borders of the Karanga. This pre-Lovedu culture, or people of Sotho-Tswana-Karanga we shall call the 'Sotho substratum'.

Into this geographically isolated area, penetrated only by small groups of people migrating under pressure, there came (*c.* 1600) the Lovedu royal group, descendants of Mambo, one of the sons of Monomotapa and chief of one of the provinces into which the empire of the Karanga had split up. Lovedu tradition as to the disruption of Monomotapa's kingdom is confirmed by Portuguese writers; it was the disintegration that enabled the Portuguese to extend their settlement inland as far as Sena (1609). There is much other evidence, but the relationship between the Karanga, Lozwi (two names used by the Lovedu in their praise songs), and Monomotapa (which some authorities say is a myth) is lamentably obscure. 'Judging from the customs, history and language', writes E. G. Howman,[1] 'these people [Vakaranga] were the tribe mentioned in all the Portuguese records of three hundred years ago as being the people of Monomotapa, though unfortunately no trace of this name can be found as surviving nowadays.' It is significant that in Lovedu tradition this name is known.

After the advent of the Lovedu, the history of the lowveld becomes more decipherable, for the tribes that rule to-day have more or less detailed traditions of their past which may be interrelated, while the peoples of the Sotho substratum either have no history or it is vague or starts somewhere in Lovedu times. Some of the histories are nothing short of amazing in their comprehensiveness. Muhlava, chief of the Nkuna, for instance, gave us a history covering a century during which the Nkuna were subjects of five different Sotho tribes, and every detail in it, whether of time-sequences or events or movements of people, was corroborated by the accounts given us in these tribes.

It is clear that in their early period the Lovedu for long remained undisturbed in their secluded environment. There were minor infiltrations, for there were movements of peoples on the far-off boundaries of the lowveld; but the first considerable body of people that came within

[1] *South African Journal of Science*, vol. xv, 384.

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striking distance was the Venda. They crossed the Limpopo from the north in many successive waves, culminating in the arrival of the royal Kwindɛ group (*c.* 1700). The histories of Lovedu and Venda do not converge in Rhodesia, but both peoples had early contacts with Karanga, Lozwi, and Nyai and both have traditions of the Mambo. There is also the legend among the Venda of having conquered fireless aborigines with fire. But it is in the post-migratory period, and especially between *c.* 1750 and 1820, that contacts multiplied through trade, migrations, royal marriages, and the Venda practice of seeking their rain, not only from their high god Mwari at Mbvumela in the Rhodesian Matopo Hills, but also from Mujaji, whom they sometimes call 'the wife who brings us water to wash our face'. When the *kwevo* of Tswale and Moila, two Venda tribes, came to settle on the borders of Vulovedu (*c.* 1730) a complex interpenetration started; they were Loveduized, while the Mamaila section of the Lovedu, moving northwards, first became Vendaized, so that thirty or forty years ago the court language was still Venda, and subsequently, owing to historical factors, fell under influences from the south and south-west, and reverted to Khilovedu and Lovedu-like cultural patterns.

The channel of inter-communication between Venda and Lovedu was so wide in *c.* 1780 that Mashau, a Venda chief, came personally to aid Mugɔdɔ to suppress the rebels in Vulovedu; but it gradually narrowed from *c.* 1790 onwards, owing to the intrusion from the south-west and north-west of Ɖɔkwa and Virwa respectively; and it was all but blocked since *c.* 1840 by the Shangana-Ṭonga invasion from the east. This invasion also drove southwards into Vulovedu many Venda refugees, some of whom still speak Venda. Swelling the Venda or Venda-Karanga influences were the Nyai, whose northern manners and dress are still remembered, Virwa, whose history appears to link them with the southern Zimbabwe at Mapungubwe, and the Thɔvɔlɔ. These Thɔvɔlɔ say they are from Vukhalaga, but it is clear that they had migrated southwards long ago and later became Sothoized to the east of Vulovedu, mixing there with the Sotho substratum, especially the ubiquitous *ɗou*. About 1800 they fled before the Mafɛfɛ invasion from the south and, settling in Vulovedu, brought with them the cult of spirit possession

Great as has been the influx and influence of the Venda, it is eclipsed by that of the Laudi, a name under which we include the Phalavorwa, Nareni (both Mahlo and Letswalo), and Koni. All of them, including large sections of the Venda, such as Mphaphuli, Lwamɔndɔ, and Masia, came either from Vulaudi or Phalavorwa, in the south-east, near Swaziland. It is there that large bodies of the two original migrations of Sotho and Nguni from the far north converged upon and merged with one another. All Laudi tradition, even that of the Koni of Maḍala on the highveld, speaks of a settlement in Phalavorwa (*c.* 1620–1720). The Phalavorwa remained in the unfavourable environment between the Olifants and Letaba Rivers, some of them periodically breaking away from it and settling in Vulovedu. The Nareni, having left Phalavorwa, split into the Mahlo and the Letswalo, and the latter, scattering along the foothills of the Drakensberg, penetrated into Vulovedu (*c.* 1750). At one

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174 time, when Bodile ruled (1825–50), there was close contact between the Letswalo and the Lovedu, the chiefs of the two tribes exchanging rain medicines. The Koni also left Phalaborwa and eventually gave rise in the area we are considering to a great chain of tribes: the Khaha of Maake (*c.* 1730) and of Maupa (*c.* 1800), and the Koni of Maḍala (*c.* 1720) and Dikxale (*c.* 1830). By 1750 the Laudi had completely invested the Lovedu on the east, south, and south-west. Their influx into Vulovedu, the inviolable country of the Rain-Queen, greatly increased as the result of disturbances in the south and south-east, from 1820 to 1870. The turmoil was caused by Moselekatse's spoliation, ravages by fugitive cannibals, Pedi and Mafefe raids, Shangana-Ṭonga invasions, and Swazi depredations. The accretions to the Lovedu enhanced the great influence of the Laudi, predominantly an old Sotho people.

Between 1800 and 1870 many Central Sotho or Pedi scaled the Drakensberg and spread their culture first among the Laudi and through them into Vulovedu. The Mafefe, carriers of this culture, for long ruled several lowveld tribes; and the Shai, from amid a Pedi and Transvaal Ndebele environment, crossed the Olifants River and many settled in Vulovedu (*c.* 1840). But the main Central Sotho infiltrations, coming from the west, were greatly modified in passing through the sieve of highveld Sotho. Among them were the Kwena, already mentioned, and the Ṭalerwa (*c.* 1740), but the Ṭalerwa as well as other scattered bands from the high veld at first represented rather Northern Sotho influences; and only later, after considerable admixture from the west and south Tswana and Central Sotho elements began to predominate. The upper layer of highveld tribes, such as the Ḍokwa and Moletshe, originated from the west and south-west (Tswana). They have been very receptive to Pedi influences, since the Pedi themselves were overlorded by the Kxatla, who were, if not Tswana, close relatives of the Tswana. Thus during the ascendancy of the Pedi under Thulare (1800–24) and the Tfetle raids, when many highveld tribes fled to Pediland, Central Sotho culture penetrated deeply into the highveld. It was the Ḍokwa who carried this mixed Sotho culture farthest into the lowveld, but among the Lovedu the intrusion was regarded as a challenge to be resisted, and it has left a heritage of hatred and antagonism, which, though no justification continues to exist for it, is still alive to-day.

Numerically the greatest single invasion of the lowveld was that of the Shangana-Ṭonga. Some few Ṭonga, who came long before the nineteenth century, were assimilated without leaving any perceptible marks on Lovedu culture. During the nineteenth century successive waves of Shangana-Ṭonga fell upon the lowveld: refugees fleeing before Manukuza, leader of the Nguni from Zululand (*c.* 1836–40); groups escaping from the clash between Mawewe and Mzila, rival claimants to the throne after the death of Manukuza (Soshangane) (1856–70); and fugitives seeking safety after Ngungunyane's defeat by the Portuguese (1894). These are the unassimilable Shangana-Ṭonga, originating from all parts of Ṭongaland, and in the country of Mujaji segregating themselves in the valleys, while the Lovedu cling to the hills. They have an exceedingly complicated history, but it is sufficient to note that, though many of them

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have broken away from Lovedu overlordship since the beginning of the twentieth century, Vulovedu has been crowded and its borders surrounded by Shangana-Tonga.

It is manifestly impossible to examine in detail the nature and magnitude of the changes in Lovedu culture that may be attributed to the Sotho substratum, Venda, Laudi, Shangana-Tonga, and other tribes. We may, however, as an illustration, cursorily trace the evolution, under these influences, of the Lovedu royal complex of institutions. The germs of this complex come from the ancestors of the royal group. The Portuguese record that only a man without physical imperfections could become chief and that the Mambo handed his daughters to his bodyguard, who gave in return, not bride-price, but faithful service. According to Dos Santos,[1] writing in 1601, it was formerly the custom of the kings of Sofala to commit suicide by poisoning when any disaster fell upon them or they were disfigured by a physical defect, and, further, though it was incest outside the royal circle, kings married their own sisters or daughters. Even to-day there is evidence among some Shona of the rite of the door, of women rulers, and of celibate female rain-makers.

This is the nucleus around which the Lovedu have elaborated their royal institutions. Its primary elements did not come in the post-migratory period, for they are, except for the vaguest indications, absent among the Venda, who have always constituted the buffer between Lovedu and Karanga; and their presence among Nareni and Khaha to the south is not a feature of the Laudi or Eastern Sotho, but can be historically traced to the Lovedu. Among the Virwa an attenuated form of this complex may be attributed to Karanga influences. The accretions to and fallings away from the old nucleus were inevitable in the new setting of the Lovedu. The powers of the Karanga high god, who made rain and supported the sacred king, became projected upon the Lovedu queen; a mere vestige is left of the saturnalian licence accompanying the accession of a Karanga chief; and unsuccessful Lovedu claimants to the throne, who generally flee the country after the interregnum, are still referred to as *mambo* (sing. *lembo*). But there is among the Lovedu no sign of the resuscitation of the spirit of the deceased Karanga king in the maggots emerging from the decaying body as it lies sealed in a special hut before burial.

It is curious that among the Mamavolo, after 250 years of subjection to influences of the Sotho substratum and the Western and Central Sotho, this complex has been obliterated, while among the Lovedu it has been elaborated. The varying response is, however, intelligible in the light of their different histories. The Mamavolo, hiving off from the main body, were overwhelmed by the Sotho; even a cursory study shows how they lost their bearings and abandoned their faith in their heritage and, for security, remodelled their institutions upon those of their powerful neighbours. But the Lovedu maintained their dominance in their lowveld environment; they dealt with the challenges of invaders by elaborating the royal pattern so as to absorb them; and they responded to the prevailing belief that, not a priesthood, but the chief himself must

[1] Quoted in Theal, *Records of S.E. Africa*, vii. 191, 194.

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mediate for rain by a new conception both of the high god and of the divinity of the queen.

The forces refashioning the old nucleus are the result of composite internal reactions to external influences. In Chapter I ('Pageants of the Past') we saw how, in the face of a feeling of insecurity, Khiali tried to safeguard the succession by casting out the heir, and how the innovation set into motion forces that precipitated the change from kings to queens. Simultaneously came the elevation of the queens to veritable rain-gods. The Lovedu rain-making technique is Sotho and constrains the forces of nature by magic; it is a fundamental departure from the Karanga technique, which uses an appeal to the high god through his priests on the mountain, where he manifests himself in clamour and flame. But there is still a faint connexion, for foreigners allege that Mujaji herself originally obtained her power from Levibi, where Mwari appeared in thunder and lightning to a chief of the Ṭavatsinde, a group among the Venda. *Ʋuuga ya uuga bula e a na*, thundering [on the mountain of] Ʋuuga [is followed by] pattering rain, is still the praise-title of the Levibi of Ʋulovedu. The Lovedu, we surmise, have replaced Mwari by Kuzwane, creator-god, divested of his rain-making and celestial powers, and the word 'Mwari' (or 'Mwali') suggests, even to the Lovedu mind, Muhale, the Lovedu chief who is founder of the tribe, the only semi-hero of legend, and is associated with ritual, as, for instance, the Bird of Muhale in the *vyali* initiation, which is also associated with rain.

But if this is conjecture, it is significant that power to effect the great change from kings to queens was sought in father-daughter incest, a pattern enjoined by the Karanga and considered as the source of fertility among the Shona. Not only did the traditional model sanctify the change, but the success of the experiment was guaranteed by the elaboration of values already existing in the society. Indeed, the change is represented merely as a reassertion of an ancient but fictitious cycle of kings and queens. The accession of a woman, in spite of the high position of women, was obviously a difficulty; but the rationalization provided by a supposed cycle satisfied misgivings, and the change lent itself to transforming the danger of foreign encirclement into an instrument for extending the network of political institutions. The complicated exchanges of the queen's wives constitute only an extension of the old pattern of the house of Mambo, who received daughters from his sub-chiefs in return for protection or food or as a result of conquest, and who handed out his daughters to his personal bodyguard.

In the elaboration of the Lovedu royal complex, the model and justification came from their Karanga ancestors, but the vital addition of a new association of the chief with rain, which is neither Karanga nor Venda, was inspired by Sotho culture. But, in the Sotho substratum, rain, agricultural rites, and the drum cult were inextricably merged and, in the context of the Lovedu pattern, they did not all find an equally firm place. We shall touch lightly upon this complex, noting here merely the extraordinary fact that, despite the long-continued pressure of Venda influences, the Venda contribution to the Lovedu royal pattern is to-day hardly perceptible. The reason lies partly in its incongruity with the

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conception of a female ruler who is also a divine rain-maker, but partly also in the obscuring of the borrowed elements by readjustments since the accession of a queen.

For a time the Lovedu kings followed the custom of the solitary dance (*u pondela*) of the Venda. It was under the inspiration of such a dance just before his death that Mugodo (*c.* 1790) made his famous prophecy. Venda chiefs perform this dance either shortly after accession, when it firmly establishes against all claims their divine title to the throne, or towards the end of their reign, when it symbolizes abjuration of earthly things and elevation to godhead. These conceptions are inconsistent with the Lovedu pattern, which prescribes the rite of the door as the title to succession, and safeguards the queen's inscrutability by making her the inaccessible 'huckster in her hut'.

The special Venda disposition of forces and persons in the organization of the royal court has left numerous marks in Lovedu culture and its reception facilitated the transition from kings to queens. The *khadi* (father's sister or the sister), as priestess, is in a favourable position to assume control during the minority of the heir, as is the case to-day among the Sekhopo and in many districts in Ulovedu. There is also the critical instance of the Mamaila, where between 1825 and 1895 sometimes men and sometimes women ascended the throne, and where the interaction of the two patterns may be closely observed. The Venda emphasis on the virginity, for a time, of the chief's wives has had widespread repercussions even as far as the Nareni; and among the Lovedu it has become interlocked with the cogs of the political machinery, so that, while the permanently chaste are rewarded, the unchaste go out as wives of great men to strengthen their loyalty to the royal house. Nowhere else has such an ingenious solution or reinterpretation been evolved, though the differing readjustments among the various tribes show amazing inventiveness and resourcefulness.

The patterns and culture elements of the royal complex among the surrounding tribes, which have found no place in the Lovedu complex, are too numerous to mention; but what is rejected is just as important as what is adopted in the evaluation and interpretation of the forces determining change. Least has been taken from the modern Shangana-Tonga, but there are similarities in detail, though not in pattern, which may be ascribed to a common heritage of the distant past. It is, for instance, only the Tonga in these parts who have to any extent elaborated the idea of placing chiefs' wives as rulers in the provinces, a practice known among the Lovedu kings long before the arrival of the Shangana-Tonga. Among the Shangana-Tonga the accession of a brother to the throne admits of the progressive realization of aspirations fostered by a culture in which at one and the same time the hierarchy of age and the coincidence of maturity with the peak of life as well as display and competition are more emphasized than among the Lovedu. This pattern is quite unacceptable among the Lovedu.

There are many other suggestive contrasts, but what must surprise the observer is the small contribution (apart from the rain-making technique) of the Sotho from the south and west. The distribution of medicated

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174 seeds by the chief, as among the highveld Sotho, is thought to savour
643 of witchcraft, as only witches use medicine to make the crops grow. The
177 Pedi pattern of the 'tribal candle', the chief wife whose first son succeeds and whose bride-price is contributed by the tribe (who thereby obtain a stake in the succession) has penetrated far. It has been partially accepted by the Laudi as well as the Sekhɔpɔ; but the Lovedu have not been influenced. Of absorbing interest and immense interpretative value has been the conflict of Lovedu and Pedi patterns where their incongruity precipitated a crisis among the Nareni and Khaha.

Everywhere in the lowveld the transition from kings to queens caused disturbances, and the form of justification invariably reflects values in the cultures concerned. Among the Mamaila the change is justified by the sin of the male heir. When the change first occurred, the male heir was ousted because he had cohabited with his father's wives, which is a disqualification by Venda standards. Thereafter males again ruled. When the change occurred a second time, the male heir was driven off because he had broken open the door, which is a sin by Lovedu standards.

Among the Khaha of Maake and the Nareni, both Mahlo and Letswalo, the position is different and may be considered less cursorily, though unfortunately only in very broad outline. The Khaha, greatly disturbed by invasions from the south, sought stability by trying to imitate Mujaji I, the security of whose tribe they attributed to her feminine powers and longevity. In those days (1827) the Mafɛfɛ, following the Pedi pattern of royal marriage, politically dominated the Khaha as well as many other tribes. Nevertheless, among the Khaha, Mali, a woman, succeeded as chief against her brothers and was 'placed' by Mujaji. She was the first Khaha female ruler, modelled her court upon the Lovedu pattern, and even adopted ritual suicide as a means to power. The whole Lovedu pattern was not incorporated, for the traditional basis was lacking, especially as regards the ascendancy of women, the unquestioned acceptance of the caprices of the door, and the conception of receiving tributary wives and redistributing them. Thus men were not excluded from the throne. Mali herself, having failed to prevent the flight into exile of her people, was succeeded by a male chief; but in 1928 a woman, Mali II (or Maake, as she is sometimes called), was called upon to rule. Mali II was married, was asked to renounce her husband, as queens could have no official husbands, and when she refused she had to abdicate and now reigns merely as regent during the minority of her brother. The task of integrating the Lovedu with the Khaha pattern was never completed: the door is invoked to decide only between rivals with plausible claims, and no adequate solution has been found to harmonize the Pedi and Lovedu patterns of royal marriage. The chief wife even of the queen among the Khaha is the mother's brother's daughter, and it is for her marriage that in theory each district head must contribute cattle 'to seek their mother' (*hu nyagɛla mma vɔna*).

Among the Mahlo Nareni, sporadically dominated by the Mafɛfɛ until as late as 1901, the change came under conditions of European control (1923). The door entrusted the rain charms and chieftainship to Manjana, wife of the deceased chief, Segɔrɔrɔ. But when strife occurred, the

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European intervened, construed the opening of the door as coincidence, and recognized a son of Segɔrɔrɔ's first wife. (Incidentally, the Pedi conception of the 'tribal candle', though accepted for a time, by 1923 was again receding before the old Laudi insistence that the mother's brother's daughter required no additional support to be chief wife.) To-day the tribe is split: Manjana's magic has power to call up the clouds, but the quackery of the recognized chief sweeps up gales which scatter the rain.

Among the Letswalo the change, motivated by a desire for security, aggravated a crisis which continued into the European period and was ended by the drastic intervention of the European. Ramɔdau, son of chief Bodile, defied his father by refusing to espouse his one-eyed cross-cousin, whom Bodile himself then married. But this wife turned out to be a witch who expiated her offence of stealing the rain charms by being mauled to death by a lion. Angered by his son's disobedience and his wife's treachery, Bodile then (*c.* 1850) prophesied the coming of the ants and the accession of a woman; but in the total setting of the drama the son's disobedience is condoned by representing his cross-cousin as a deformed witch and the treachery that threatens the welfare of the tribe is made the occasion for the accession of Magaepia, daughter of Bodile. The whole theme is handled less skilfully than among the Lovedu and indicates the existence of many conflicting motives. Before Magaepia succeeded there were wholesale assassinations of successive heirs; Magaepia, having replaced the lost rain charms, became, first, rain-maker to Ramadau and, after his death at the hands of the Swazi invaders, queen, but only of a portion of the tribe. The strife continued, the European intervened, and, when the tribes of the lowveld rose against the encroaching settlers (1894), the Letswalo joined them, but suffered a devastating defeat.

Changes can be traced in all aspects of Lovedu culture, some greater, some smaller than those in their royal institutions. It will take us too far afield to deal with these changes, but a few remarks may be of interest. Almost nothing of the *gomana-ʊyali-ʊvhwera-ʊdiga* complex came with the royal group. Some of it can be attributed to the Sotho substratum: it is the *ɖou* of Ravothata who make the *gomana* drums and close the *ʊyali* with their weirdly costumed dancers, the *magɔgɔbya*; the Kwena likewise claim always to have had the *gomana*; and Lovedu boys are allowed to become initiated at the *gomana* lodges of the *ɖou* of Khaɖa and of the Kwena of Maunadala, who also may accept royal boys to 'cross rapidly' (*hu ɖubunya*), or become initiated in a few days, at his *ʊvhwera*. The *magɔgɔbya* are unique, but are found also among the *ɖou* of Masoma and it is from Tsubye (the country of present-day Shai) that these costumes came over a century ago, having been brought by two men named Maschisa and Dinawe. The evidence may be indefinitely multiplied, but it is more interesting to examine for a moment the different manifestations of the complex over the Northern Transvaal, because what has been emphasized in it or muted or rejected illuminates the character of the incorporating culture.

We have no evidence of the occurrence beyond the Northern Transvaal of the sacred drums, considered as shrines consecrated by human sacrifice

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and as the focus of a 'school' for revealing the secrets of the whistling ancestors (*zwiḓajani*). Some Venda north of the Limpopo have drums of the *mɔndɔrɔ* (spirits of the chiefs) and *zwiḓajani* (familiars of Mnisi, the rain-god), and there is some evidence of drum ritual among Pedi, Venda, and even Tonga; but the elaborated drum cult belongs to the Northern Sotho. It has three characteristic elements: the supreme moments of the agricultural year are signalized by the sounding of the drums and the cult is intimately linked with rain or fertility; these calendric observances, as well as other great national occasions, are, by the interposition of the drums, brought under the surveillance of the tribal gods, represented by men masquerading as spirits who have come to earth; and in a special initiation novices are inducted into the secrets of the cult.

This constellation is most emphasized in three tribal groups: Laudi (especially Phalaborwa), Maḓala, and Xananwa-Ɗɔkwa-Moletshe. Among the Phalaborwa the striking emphasis is upon the link with rain-making, upon the *lesugu* or women's counterpart, and upon the exulting display before the drums which is permitted to those who have military and hunting exploits to their credit. These features become progressively attenuated westwards towards Ɓulovedu. The stress upon display reappears among the Maḓala, though in a different form, for there we find the esoteric *khidinkhi*, which is at once a dramatic dance inspired by the sacred drums glorifying the prowess of the chief and of warriors, and a rain and fertility rite, blessing cattle and crops and safeguarding the people against disease. In drawing into the complex the welfare of the cattle and in the absence of the *lesugu*, the Maḓala pattern differs from that of the Laudi, but approximates that of the Xananwa-Ɗɔkwa-Moletshe. These differences coincide with the emphases of the different cultures. The Laudi have an attenuated cattle-cult, though it is better developed than among the Lovedu; whereas the highveld Sotho, influenced from the west and south-west, have a fuller cattle-cult, though by no means as elaborate as that of the west (Tswana) with its seasonal migratory life, conditioned partly by pastoralism and partly by a desire for security in a difficult environment. Among the Laudi men's and women's initiations are often combined, but on the highveld they are markedly separated, for the *vyali* and *vuhwera* exist as distinct institutions and the Bird, guiding spirit of the *vyali*, is usually absent. In the third area, that of the Xananwa-Ɗɔkwa-Moletshe, the dispositions are in many respects quite distinctive. The drums become the focus of an elaborate fertility cult, rain-making stands outside the complex, and the chief *motif* is not display, but dramatization of obedience to the gods and loyalty to the chief. The supreme moment is when the manhood of the tribe, collected in the cattle kraal, receive the command of the gods communicated, under inspiration of the drums, by the *zwiḓajani*.

There is every possible variation in the patterns among the intervening tribes. In some, such as Tswale, Moila, Dikxale, Mamavolo, and Ɓirwa of Makhatho, the cult is often structurally unintegrated, standing outside the province of the chief and consisting merely of 'schools' managed by outsiders who have their own drums. The cult in these cases is practised merely for revenue purposes; it is a 'business' as the

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Natives say; the alien drums are pierced and rendered useless at the death, not of the chief, but of their owners; and the *zwidajani* are often visitors from tribes where the cult is better developed. Among the Lovedu the cult has been only partially accepted; the pattern is the pattern of the focal area in the east. The features that have been attenuated or elaborated can be explained in the light of the emphasis of Lovedu culture: there is no display, no stress upon fertility, no linking with the welfare of the cattle, no elaboration in connexion with agricultural ritual, but the *zwidajani* command peace and agreement among men.

Elsewhere in this book we have given slight indications that the Lovedu interlocking *munywalo* exchanges and social structure can be traced to Karanga models; that the Lovedu have rejected the pattern of the wedding feast and wedding gifts which comes from the west; that Lovedu legal arrangements are the resultant of composite forces; that the smeller-out and the cult of spirit possession come from the Shangana-Tonga and Thovela. These and many other borrowed culture elements may be followed up with advantage, and indicate the magnitude of culture change. But for our purposes, before proceeding to discuss the nature and effect of the impact of Western culture, a brief reference to Shangana-Tonga influences will suffice. Despite similarities in detail—an attenuated boys' puberty rite, the conception of *makhuma* (ritual defilement), the indirect warning to the witch by *hu tshila*, to mention a few features—and despite the extensive reception by the Lovedu of Shangana-Tonga elements of material culture—fowls, various crops, and methods of storing and threshing and stamping—the striking feature remains the great gulf between the two cultural configurations. They have, for instance, different views as regards sex morality, different marriage patterns, different conceptions of the hierarchy of age and the position of women; they deal differently with the situation of death, with rain-making, display, and regimentation, and, whereas the social groupings are totemic among the Lovedu, they are non-totemic among the Shangana-Tonga.

There are many other divergences, but one difference that calls for comment is the attitude to and reception of European culture. More adaptable, if brazen, than the Lovedu, at least in their new environment, the Shangana-Tonga have, as fugitives under Sotho domination, more complacently submitted themselves to European conquest. Disciplined by the military heritage of the Zulu, they made efficient police and soldiers, especially against their Sotho overlords. Their training in competition, trade, and display enabled them to respond better than the Lovedu to the stimuli of Western culture. Above all, European penetration benefited them, while it dispossessed the Sotho. The history of the contacts and reactions is the history of a century, which is far too complicated for treatment here. But this can be said: the Shangana-Tonga gained land and the right to be ruled by their own chiefs; the Lovedu lost land which was given to their erstwhile subjects; the prestige of Mujaji in the eyes of the white man waned while that of Shangana-Tonga chiefs waxed; and the Shangana-Tonga subservience

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PROPERTY, CROSS-COUSIN MARRIAGE, AND THE FAMILY CYCLE AMONG THE LOBEDU[1]

Eileen Jensen Krige

THE Lobedu are a South Bantu people characterized by the institution of 'divine kingship'. They live in a mountainous area of the North-eastern Transvaal lowveld. Originally from *Bokhalaga* (S. Rhodesia), they migrated south when the empire of Monomotapa broke up and established themselves as rulers over the sparse Sotho population they found in occupation. The rain-making powers of their queen, enhanced by the mystery and secrecy of her ritual seclusion, attracted many accretions from diverse tribal groups from surrounding areas who sought security and peace particularly during the period of unrest following the wars of Shaka, the Zulu, and the raids of Matabele and Swazi. For enemies feared to attack the Lobedu queen lest they be visited by drought and locusts. The descendants of the Lobedu proper therefore form only a small portion of the total population which, however, except for relatively recent Tsonga immigrants from Portuguese East Africa, is remarkably homogeneous in culture. The Lobedu had no military traditions and built up their kingdom by peaceful means.

The form of government is that of a central authority with the queen as the head of state and spatially defined political

[1]The field-work on which this essay is based was carried out jointly with my husband, the late J. D. Krige, under the auspices of the International African Institute in 1936–8, and was supplemented and brought up to date by short field trips in 1961 and 1962.